



**Town of Camden**  
**Minutes of the Select Board Meeting**  
**January 17, 2012**  
**7:00pm**

**PRESENT:** Chairperson Martin Cates, Vice Chairperson Morgan Laidlaw, John French, Jr., James Heard, Donald White, and Town Manager Finnigan. Also present were members of the press and public.

**ABSENT:** Town Attorney Kelly

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Citizen Comments**

Chairperson Cates reviewed the guidelines for citizen comments. There were no public comments so the floor was opened to board comments.

Don White thanked Camden Parks and Recreation Director Jeff Kuller for his efforts in formulating a compromise to the Snow Bowl pet rule, resulting in a policy whereby dogs would be allowed on leashes on certain areas of the mountain. He also commended the many volunteers who give their time to Town committees. He urged residents who may be interested in serving to contact the Town Office or to go to the Town's website as there are still openings on some committees.

White said that on Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup> the Camden Opera House will utilize its new Specticast system to show the premiere of *The Red Machine*. The Opera House plans to host simulcasts and re-broadcasts of performances using this new technology.

James Heard echoed Don White's comments on the Snow Bowl policy, noting that it's a "people policy" more than a dog policy.

**3. Approval of Board Minutes**

Approval of the minutes of the January 3, 2012 meeting of the Board was considered. Chairperson Cates corrected the name on line 331 of the minutes from Cates to Laidlaw.

*Don White made a motion, seconded by Morgan Laidlaw to accept the minutes as amended. The motion was approved unanimously.*

**4. Consent Agenda**

It had been recommended by the Camden Public Library that during the Winterfest event on January 28<sup>th</sup> Atlantic Avenue be temporarily closed for safety reasons. The Library had asked the Select Board to consider this item at their meeting.

*Morgan Laidlaw made a motion, seconded by Don White, to add the closure of Atlantic Avenue during Winterfest to the Consent Agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.*

Revised Consent Agenda:

- a) Approval of a taxicab driver application for Essie Lynn Christianson of Rockland;
- b) The recommendation that Atlantic Avenue be closed from noon to 3pm during Winterfest on January 28, 2012.

*James Heard made a motion to approve the consent agenda. John French seconded this motion and it was unanimously approved.*

**5. Communications, Presentations, and Recognitions**

- a) Presentation by the Camden Conference - *Robert G. Hirsch, President*

Robert Hirsch reviewed the history of the Camden Conference, which was founded in 1987 by the West Bay Rotary Club as a way to create an educational event for residents and visitors, and to bring people to town during the off-season. The Conference's first president was Robert Tierney. Several citizens who had retired from the Foreign Service and the State Department lived in mid-coast Maine and served as a resource for the new organization. Hirsch said that an original element of the event was educational outreach for college students, and that courses have now been created around the content of the conferences at some of Maine's educational institutions.

In 2006 the conference sold out in three days, so at that point there became a need to increase capacity of facilities to accommodate more participants. In addition to the Camden Opera House, the Strand and Hutchinson Center were then added, where the conference is streamed in real time. The Grand in Ellsworth is also a featured location now, and the conference can currently accommodate 800 people. Hirsch reviewed the estimated economic impact of the Camden Conference, saying that approximately 1000 meals are served to participants by area restaurants during the course of the event and that over 200 people stay overnight for the weekend.

This year's theme is "The US In a 21<sup>st</sup> Century World – Do we have what it takes?," featuring keynote speaker Bill Richardson, former presidential candidate and Governor of New Mexico, who also served as Energy Secretary and Ambassador to the United Nations. In conclusion, Hirsch cited the organization's volunteers who donate thousands of hours to put on a conference.

- b) Recognition of the Camden Conference

Martin Cates commended the Camden Conference on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, saying that it has grown through the decades to become both a prestigious event as well as an economic boost for the mid-coast region, contributing to the high reputation of our town in the eyes of event speakers and attendees. He said that the Select Board recognizes the work of the organizers of the Camden Conference and thanks them for their efforts. He presented a plaque to Robert Hirsch on behalf of the Town of Camden.

**6. Select Board Member Reports**

Don White reported that he had attended the Planning Board on January 5<sup>th</sup>. At the meeting, Code Enforcement Officer Steve Wilson had reviewed the changes in MUBEC (the Municipal Uniform Building Energy Code) which will require stricter rules on building permits. There will be a public hearing on these changes and the topic will likely be before the voters in June. He said that at their next meeting the Planning Board will discuss mobile food vendors.

Don told the Board that the Camden Opera House Committee along with staff had met on January 10<sup>th</sup> to consider their strategic plan. Areas of concentration include a plan for renovating the third floor; investigating staffing needs; increasing marketing efforts in the areas of branding and attracting premiere groups to the facility; and a review of COH policies. Also discussed at the retreat was whether the Opera House should focus on profitability. He reported that the group felt that the operation should strive to be revenue neutral within five years.

White had also attended the Historic Resources Committee on January 10<sup>th</sup> where QR Codes had been addressed. He noted that more details are forthcoming with regard to sizing and location for the QR Codes. Also on the 10<sup>th</sup>, the Sign Subcommittee of the Planning Board had held their first meeting to begin to address what signage might look like in conjunction with the Downtown Master Plan. The Sign Subcommittee will be meeting every week on Thursdays at 5:30.

Finally, White reported that the Regional Transit Group is looking at the possibility of seeking some funding and is building a strategic plan.

Morgan Laidlaw reported on the Conservation Committee's December meeting. Their next meeting will address the committee's goals for the year.

James Heard said that he had attended the Parks and Recreation Committee on January 12<sup>th</sup> where the dog policy at the Snow Bowl had been discussed, resulting in a compromise to allow dogs on leashes on certain areas of the mountain.

Martin Cates reported that he had attended the CEDAC meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup> where there had been discussion on Camden Affordable Housing as well as on the Parking and Transportation Committee recommendation.

Cates reminded people the first of two community meetings to get input into the Downtown Master Plan would be held on Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at the Camden Opera House. Residents and business owners are encouraged to attend. He noted that as a resource for citizens, there is a section of the Town of Camden's website dedicated to the Downtown Master Plan. Residents who can't attend the community meeting are invited to contribute ideas by sending them to Brian Hodges, Development Director for the Town of Camden.

Chairperson Cates said that CEDAC had also discussed the Tannery site and had looked at the idea of collaborating with local realtors to market the property. Brian Hodges will be talking with a few local agencies to determine how best to proceed.

Lastly, Cates reported the potential for the Opera House Committee's potential use of Tax Increment Finance (TIF) funds which would need Select Board consideration.

## **7. Town Manager's Report**

Town Manager Finnigan noted that the Toboggan Nationals are coming up in early February, and while the Snow Bowl is reporting that the two- and three-person teams are sold out, there is still room for four-person teams. She said that the Snow Bowl had been actively making snow and was getting ready to host three events over the upcoming weekend including a ski lessons for people with disabilities. She also noted that she has been spending time getting ready for budget season.

## **8. Old Business**

The Planning Board requested that the Select Board establish a Comprehensive Planning Committee to review and update the Town's Comprehensive Plan. A joint working group of Select Board and Planning Board members and staff met to discuss the composition of the committee. The Planning Board requested that this item be tabled so the Planning Board could meet and act on an official recommendation to the Select Board.

*Don White made a motion, seconded by Jim Heard to table this item until the February 7 meeting.*

## **9. New Business**

The Town Manager reviewed the process to address inner harbor marina improvements. At the September 20, 2011 Select Board meeting, the Harbor Committee had presented a request that the Harbor Projects Reserve Funds be used to upgrade the marina at the Public Landing. The Select Board had voted to approve up to \$120,000 for this project. The project was advertised for bid with bids due at 2pm on Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup>.

Town Manager Finnigan reported that they had received 5 bids for the floats and 3 bids to install the pilings and dolphins. The process guidelines stated that bids were to be awarded to the lowest bidder who can meet the bid specifications. Since both of the low bidders met the specifications, it was recommended that the bids be awarded to the lowest bidders for each of the elements of the project. The total bid price of both the floats and the piling system amounts to \$102,340 which is \$17,660 under budget. The Town Manager reported that there had been some concern voiced by members of the Harbor Committee during the bidding process regarding awarding bids to local contractors, but that the guidelines for the process had been followed. She said that the timeline on the project is that it should be completed by early April.

*John French made a motion, seconded by Don White to award the bid for floats for the inner harbor marina project to Custom Float Services of Portland in the amount of \$72,660, and to award the bid for pilings for the inner harbor marina project to Art Tibbetts Marine Contractor of Camden in the amount of \$29,680. The motion was unanimously approved.*

## **Adjourn**

*John French made a motion, seconded by Don White to adjourn as Select Board and convene as Board of Assessors. The motion was approved unanimously.*

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### **Board of Assessors**

**1. Consideration of a real estate property tax abatement and corresponding off-setting supplement for Arissa L. Egan, Jonathan Egan, and Gary M. Huyser of 110 Rollins Road**

Wes Robinson, Assessors' Agent for the Town of Camden, explained the purpose of the abatement request. He said that Gary Huyser had conveyed a portion of his property located on Rollins Road to Arissa and Jonathan Egan, and had subsequently conveyed the remaining 50% in a separate deed. The assessment records were not updated to reflect that transaction. The purpose of this abatement request was to correct that.

*John French made a motion to grant a tax abatement and supplemental assessment as recommended by the Assessors' Agent. Morgan Laidlaw seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.*

**2. Consideration of a real estate property tax abatement request by Georgiana McCabe of 156 Shermans Point Road**

Wes Robinson, Assessors' Agent reported that Georgiana McCabe of 156 Shermans Point Road had requested that the assessment of her land value be reduced from \$1,516,100 to \$1,137,375. He told the Board that he had found no evidence to support an over-valuation claim and that he recommended denial of this request. There was discussion about comparable properties in the neighborhood, the process of valuing waterfront properties, and the status of the overall real estate market.

*John French made a motion to deny the real estate property tax abatement request by Georgiana McCabe of 156 Shermans Point Road. Morgan Laidlaw seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.*

**3. Presentation by the Assessors' Agent**

Assessors' Agent Wes Robinson made a presentation to the Board, reviewing processes he goes through to assess properties in the town. He said that in Camden, assessment values average out at 91% of selling prices and observed that the down real estate market had hit Camden later than elsewhere in Maine. There was some discussion on tax abatements and the process that a property owner must go through to provide evidence that they've been over-assessed. Robinson said that there had been some cases recently where properties had sold for substantially less than their assessed value. Lastly he informed the Board of his work schedule during the periods of the year.

### **Adjourn**

*Don White made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Morgan Laidlaw. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.*

Respectfully submitted,

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Karen Brace  
Recording Secretary